

**UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO  
GOVERNING COUNCIL**

Report #442 of the Academic Appeals Committee  
October 21, 2025

To the Academic Board  
University of Toronto

Your Committee reports that it held a hearing on October 3, 2025, at which the following members were present:

**Academic Appeals Committee Members:**

Professor Hamish Stewart, Senior Chair  
Professor Angela Pyle, Teaching Staff Governor  
Rishi Shah, Student Governor

**Hearing Secretary:**

Karen Bellinger, Associate Director, Office of Appeals, Discipline and Faculty Grievances

**For the Student Appellant:**

R.S. (the “Student”)

**For the University of Toronto Mississauga:**

Professor Vivienne Luk, Associate Dean, Academic Experience

**Overview**

The Student appeals from a decision of the Academic Appeals Subcommittee (AAS) of the University of Toronto Mississauga (UTM), dismissing his appeal from UTM’s Committee on Standing (COS), which dismissed his appeal from UTM’s decision to refuse his petition for second deferred examinations in three courses from the fall 2023 term.

The appeal is dismissed.

**Previous proceedings**

The Student is enrolled in a Bachelor’s degree program at the University of Toronto Mississauga (UTM). In the Fall 2023 term, he was enrolled in four courses. The final examinations in these courses were scheduled for the December 2023 examination period. The Student was granted a deferral of the final examination in three courses (MAT232H, MAT244H, and STA256H). The deferred examinations were set for February 20, 22, and 23, 2024, during the Winter term Reading Week.

On February 21, 2024, the student petitioned UTM for further deferrals of each of these three examinations. The only reason given in support of the petitions was “time conflict” (UTM materials, pp. 023-029). The Student provided no supporting documentation. The petitions were denied, and the Student therefore received a grade of zero on each examination. As a result, the Student received a grade of F in each of the three courses.

On April 15, 2024, the Student appealed the denial of his petitions to the COS. In his appeal the Student stated: “During Reading Week, I need to return home due to a family emergency, and my dog has also fallen ill and requires care” (Student’s materials, p. 034). The Student’s appeal was dismissed. The COS stated (UTM materials, p. 039):

Your petition for a further deferred examination in this course has been refused, as you did not present adequate compelling reasons/explanation and/or supporting documentation to warrant special considerations. It will be noted, there was no exam schedule conflict to your February Deferred Exam Period.

The Student appealed the COS’s decision to UTM’s AAS. His appeal was filed outside the 90-day deadline for commencing an appeal, but he provided compelling medical evidence of the reasons for the delay. The Chair of the AAS therefore ruled that his appeal should be allowed to proceed. In his appeal statement, the Student wrote (UTM materials, p. 046):

Around February 22, 2024, my pet dog suddenly fell ill with bloody diarrhea, continuously scratching itself, and its ears and eyes were swollen, with scratches all over its body, which deeply worried me and required a significant amount of my energy to care for it and seek medical treatment. However, due to it being the weekend, my dog did not receive treatment until February 25 [2024] when the clinic opened. Concurrently, my girlfriend felt very guilty and anxious about my dog’s illness, which worsened her existing anxiety and depression, causing me to focus on comforting her. These events led to my missing the deferred exam period for [the three courses].

The Student submitted a bill from a veterinarian, indicating that on February 25, 2024, his dog “Bagel” had been seen and treated (UTM materials, p. 068). The Student made no mention of the family emergency that he had referred to in his appeal to the COS.

On March 5, 2025, the AAS released a decision dismissing the Student’s appeal. Its reasons for dismissing the appeal were as follows:

While the Subcommittee sympathized with the difficulties you faced, the members of the Subcommittee noted that you did not present a compelling case, which would prompt the Subcommittee to exempt you from an academic regulation.

The Student appeals to your Committee.

## **Decision**

### *The applicable policy*

UTM's Calendar states the policy applicable to granting a petition for a second deferred examination:

Only under exceptional circumstances (e.g., hospitalization or severe personal emergency), and when supported with strong and compelling evidence, will a petition for a further deferred exam be considered.

### *The initial decision*

The Student provided no documentation in support of his original petition, stating merely that there was a "time conflict." In fact, because the deferred examinations were scheduled for Reading Week, there was no time conflict. The Student's statement therefore did not support his petition. Your Committee finds that UTM's initial decision to refuse the petition was reasonable.

### *The decision of the COS*

Your Committee finds that the documentation that the Student provided to the COS falls well short of establishing the kind of "exceptional circumstances" required to justify the granting of a second deferred examination under UTM's policies. The Student provided no description or documentation of the family emergency. The record shows that he left Toronto on February 13 and arrived in Beijing on February 14, 2024 (UTM materials, Tab M), but does not indicate when he returned to Toronto. The Student did not provide any explanation for whether or why the family emergency would prevent him from returning to Canada in time to write the deferred examinations at the scheduled times. The Student provided no documentation of his dog's illness or of the effect of the dog's illness on his ability to attend the deferred examinations. Your Committee finds that the COS's decision to dismiss the Student's appeal was reasonable.

### *The decision of the AAS*

Your Committee finds that the decision of the AAS was reasonable. The record shows that the Student was well aware of the need to provide compelling documentation in support of his position before the AAS. Because he had missed the initial deadline to appeal from the COS to the AAS, the Student was required to obtain leave from the chair of the AAS to proceed with the appeal. He did so by filing extensive documentation concerning his

situation in the summer and fall of 2024 (UTM materials, tab I), and accordingly obtained leave to proceed with his appeal.

In contrast, the documentation filed in support of the merits of the Student's appeal to the AAS was extremely thin. As noted, the Student no longer relied on the existence of a family emergency mid-February 2024 and there was accordingly no documentation relating to that matter. Instead, the Student asserted that his dog's illness and his girlfriend's situation explained his inability to take the deferred examinations. The dog's illness was documented with a bill from a veterinarian dated February 25, 2024. But there was no explanation, let alone documentation, of why the dog's illness would prevent the Student from writing the deferred examinations, which presumably he had been preparing for, on the scheduled dates. There was no explanation and no documentation at all of why the Student's girlfriend's situation would prevent him from writing the deferred examinations on the scheduled dates. Your Committee finds that it was reasonable for the AAS to conclude that the Student had not established the exceptional circumstances that would justify a further deferral of his examinations.

At the hearing of the appeal, in reply to UTM's submissions, the Student stated that his dog was a service dog. This assertion was not made at any previous step in the proceedings and was not supported with any documentation. Your Committee therefore disregarded it.

#### **A Comment from the Senior Chair**

The decision of the COS, though brief, clearly conveyed the COS's reasons for dismissing the appeal; it noted the lack of documentation and the inadequacy of the Student's assertion that there was a "time conflict." The Senior Chair of your Committee observes that, in contrast, the decision of the AAS is conclusory and does not indicate, even briefly, why the AAS found that the Student's case was not "compelling." The Senior Chair is aware that UTM has a high volume of academic appeals; nevertheless, he notes, as previous Chairs have observed, that as a matter of procedural fairness, when a student's appeal is dismissed, they are entitled to an explanation, be it brief, of the reasons why.